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BECOMING CONSERVATIONISTS, CONCEALING VICTIMS: CONFLICT AND POSITIONINGS OF MAASAI, REGARDING WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT Wildlife and its habitat has been the subject of dispute and friction in Africa, but many countries implement “community-based” approaches today. With the recent tendency of adopting more neoliberal definitions of this term, the exercise and embedment of power in wildlife conservation became the subject of studies. Using the case study of a Maasai society in southern Kenya, this paper examines the agency of local societies from the viewpoint of “positionings”: points of contention regarding wildlife; their attitudes toward conservation initiatives; and their representation of self-image. As community-based conservation (CBC) was implemented, the central point of contention shifted from land to benefits, and local people changed their attitudes from distrustful and exclusive, to receptive and passive, to more active. Also their self-representation changed from those of victims to conservationists. These changes prove they have a certain agency. However, the outcomes of their agency include both productive and unsatisfying aspects, and may lead to the reinforcement of the current animal welfare/rights-oriented policies that conceal the existence and opinion of local victims. The next step is to consider whether that agency can be regarded as a potential for abandoning the status quo and creating a more desirable environment.

Key Words: Wildlife conservation; Community-based conservation; Positionings; Maasai; Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

I. Conflict over Wildlife

Since the time of colonization, wildlife and its habitat have been the subjects of national and international disputes and friction in Africa. On the one hand, when wildlife-based businesses occupy an important position in the national economy (e.g., sport hunting, trophy trade, safari tourism), many local societies have been deprived of their lands and rights by central governments, both pre- and post-independence, who curried favor with the business sector. On the other hand, when wildlife evokes nostalgia and romanticism for wilderness in those who live abroad and in urban areas, local people were considered to pose a grave threat to wildlife and have been constrained and evicted from what was thought to be protected. Local societies have shared the same land with wildlife while coping with its dangers and damages. However, up to now, many of them have fragmented their connections to wildlife and experience only “the cost of

conservation” (Western & Wright, 1994: 7), which elicits antagonistic attitudes and both implicit and explicit resistance from local societies toward wildlife conservation (Western, 1997; Neumann, 1998; Steinhart, 2006; Iwai, 2009; Meguro, 2013).

Since the 1980s and 1990s, many countries have implemented a new “community-based” paradigm for wildlife conservation and natural resource management to rectify the situation (Hulme & Murphree, 2001a; Homewood et al. eds., 2009; Suich et al., 2009). The meaning of “community-based” differs among scholars (Western & Wright, 1994; Barrow & Murphree, 2001; Berkes, 2004; Jones & Murphree, 2004; Child, 2009a), but there is a recent trend towards adopting more neoliberal definitions of this term (Hulme & Murphree, 2001a; Child, 2004a; Suich et al., 2009; Nelson, 2010). According to neoliberals, “if species or habitats are to be conserved then they must not be isolated from the market” (Hulme & Murphree, 2001b:1). The devolution of private rights to individual landowners and the guarantee of free economic activities are rendered vitally important for eliminating conflicts over wildlife (Child, 2004b: 249; 2009a: 427).

Neoliberal conservation, however, has increasingly drawn criticism from the domain of political ecology. The discussion has only just begun, but in contrast to those who support neoliberalism, based on such economic and ecological outcomes in southern Africa as the increase in number of protected areas, wildlife population, and monetary income (Child, 2004a; Suich et al., 2009), these political ecologists pay much more attention to the operation of power and the injustice on the ground. They have demonstrated that the neoliberal approach risks oversimplifying the complexities of the wildlife conservation locations. That is, it neglects negative effects on local people such as the denial of rights, expropriation of land, and an exclusion from economic earnings that results in growing political, economic and social gaps among stakeholders contrary to its win-win suppositions (Igoe & Brockington, 2007; Büscher et al., 2012). In this way, insights into neoliberal conservation have been yielded so far, but there is a remaining important question with regard to local agency.

II. Objectives

Diverse aspects of “community-based” approaches have been discussed so far. Some studies evaluated from the viewpoint of local attitudes after receiving tangible benefits (e.g., Kideghesho et al., 2007) and others examined the amount of money earned from wildlife (e.g., Child, 2009b), or the degree of devolution to local landowners of formal rights to wildlife (e.g., Nelson & Agrawal, 2008). Meanwhile, more scholars are thinking seriously about deliberative consensus-making (e.g., Berkes, 2007), and the consistency between immanent development practices and extrinsic conservation goals (e.g., Meguro & Inoue, 2011). Regardless of the apparent diversity, these studies are similar in that they examine the conditions under which local people or societies conduct themselves in accordance with the ideal of “community-based” approaches imposed by outsiders.

The problem is that these discussions regard local actors as submissive subjects to external institutions, rather than recognize local autonomies and initiatives.

On this point, an important outgrowth from the recent debate is the concept of “environmentality.” This term was first coined by Agrawal (2005: 8), as “[a] union of *environment* and Foucauldian *governmentality*, the term stands for an approach to studying environmental politics that takes seriously the conceptual building blocks of power/knowledges, institutions, and subjectivities.” Agrawal (2005) writes of the operation of environmentality in “community-based conservation” (CBC) and discusses the process of construction of multilayered institutions and subjectivities by government—“governmentalized localities,” “regulatory community,” and “environmental subjects”—all of which work in accordance with the dictate of CBC. After that, four typologies of environmentality: neoliberal; disciplinary; sovereign; and truth, have been described by Fletcher (2010). From this point of view, Agrawal (2005) discussed only one kind of possible environmentalities, but Fletcher (2010: 177) stated that “various environmentalities may be mixed and matched in particular positionings within the conservation debate.” This presents the importance of being beware of the existence and operation of the plural forms of power.

The exercise and embedment of power in today’s wildlife conservation has been studied from the perspective of environmentality(ies). However, little has been discussed as to how local people/societies cope with such power(s) and to what degree they change their actions resulting in success or failure. The purpose of this paper was to examine the agency of local societies, as they experienced a series of extrinsic conservation initiatives.

III. Method

To grapple with the subject explained above, I refer to a recent anthropological study which deals with the issues of globalization, neoliberalism, and governmentality, and thus is helpful to this study.

With a detailed study of the indigenous people’s movement in Maasai societies in Tanzania, Hodgson (2011) demonstrated the agency of marginalized people struggling to improve their political situation. The analytical perspective adopted is “positionings.” According to Hodgson (2011: 5), the analysis of positionings is to “examine the historical, social, political and economic contexts shaping how and why certain groups decide to project and promote particular images of themselves as, for example, indigenous, environmentalist, or feminists.” In other places, Hodgson (2011: 9) explains that “[i]ndividuals and groups position themselves for and against certain ideas, issues, institutions, and identities,” and (the analysis of) positionings “demonstrate the articulation of political economy and cultural domains of meaning, signification, and representation.” In this way, the self-image and representation of marginalized people is of central importance in the analysis of positionings.

Similar discussion has also taken place in the realm of wildlife conservation. Now that “community-based” approaches prevail globally, the image of a local

situation and the representation of its stakeholders acquire more importance than before, because they are the principal criteria of contemporary conservation practices. When neoliberal conservation is discussed, the critics point out that those who follow its doctrine (re)present images which are at variance with local reality but convenient to justify and propagate their ideology (Büscher, 2010; Igoe, 2010). Besides physical forces and local collisions, metaphysical images and their global circulation become an arguing point. However, whereas various forms of resistance have been studied so far (cf. Iwai, 2009; Meguro, 2013), the possibility of strategic self-representation by local people has not been taken into consideration.

This paper examines the positionings of a local society, the Loitokitok Maasai located in the vicinity of Amboseli National Park in southern Kenya, one of the most popular tourist destinations and a site at the forefront of CBC in east Africa. The change in their positionings is examined from the perspectives described below, namely points of contention regarding wildlife, their attitudes toward conservation initiatives, and their representation of self-image. I conducted field research on an intermittent basis since 2005, which yielded a total of approximately two years of research. Most field research was conducted at the Kimana Group Ranch in the Kajiado South constituency, although occasional visits were made to other parts of the constituency. Working with a field assistant who translated from English and Swahili to Maa and *vice versa*, semi-structured interviews with key informants and participant observation at local meetings were conducted.

STUDY SITE

I. Loitokitok Maasai in the Amboseli Ecosystem

The Kajiado South constituency (6,356.3 km²), often referred to as the Amboseli ecosystem, is located in Kajiado County in southern Kenya (Fig. 1). Most of the constituency is within a savannah plain covered by bushed grassland that receives an annual average rainfall of <400 mm (Altmann et al., 2002). However, groundwater springs that originate from surrounding mountains and hills create permanent water sources. They enable irrigation cultivation in some areas of the plain. Situated near the center of this ecosystem is Amboseli National Park (390 km²), which is famous for its elephant herds and scenic view of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Like many other national parks in east Africa, Amboseli comprises only a small part of the wildlife habitat in the area. The park is not enclosed by a fence, and while local people are prohibited from entering, most of the wildlife lives outside the park and shares the same land with, and brings problems to, the local people.

The Kajiado South constituency has been the territory of the Loitokitok Maasai. The Maasai are Nilotic people, famous for being “people of cattle” (Galaty, 1982). Semi-nomadic pastoralism is their major subsistence activity. They keep

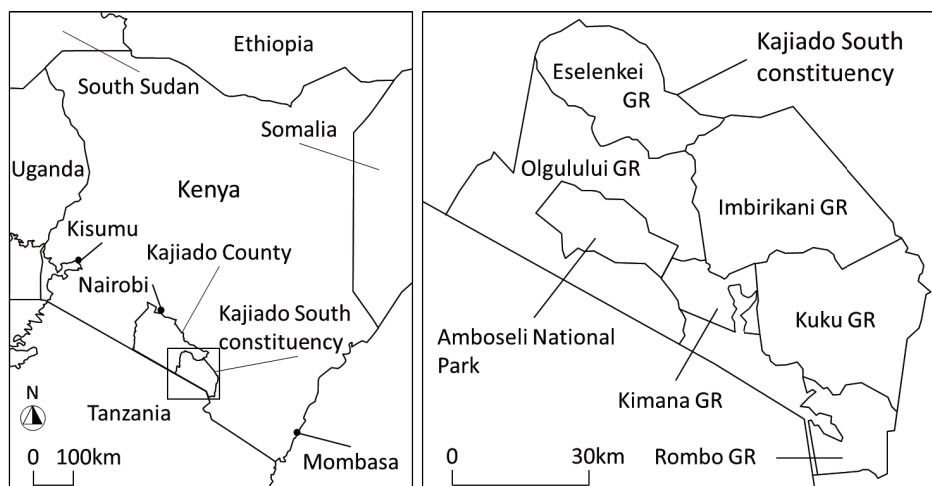


Fig. 1. Map of study site

cattle, goats and sheep, and among them, cattle play a vital role in their subsistence, cultural domain, and social relationships. Land used to be managed collectively in regional sections (*il-oshon*) in the absence of private ownership. Loitokitok is a subgroup of the Kisongo section. Livestock grazing is usually practiced within their territory, which corresponds approximately to the boundary of the current Kajiado South constituency.

Maasai society is organized around an age system; every 14–15 years, rites of passage are conducted and the men enter a new age-set (women have no age-set). Maasai men are classified as minor boys without their own age-set, adult but unmarried young warriors who live together with peers of the same age-set, and married elders having a formally organized age-set. Boys usually live in their mother's house and help with housework, including livestock grazing. Young warriors take on the responsibility of acting as guardians of local societies. When the need occurs, they practice war, raiding, and hunting as their privileges. Maasai warriors hunt wildlife to prove their manliness and win fame, drive away dangerous animals, and obtain materials for several items, but not to gain bush meat. Elders are general authorities of the society and when there are any problems, they gather to discuss matters and make decisions.

The group-ranch (GR) system was established and introduced to Maasai societies in Kenya under the provisions of 1968 Land (Group Representative) Act. The creation of GRs fragmented the sectional territory into smaller areas. The government encouraged pastoralists to settle within defined areas by granting them legal landownership. It also sought to transform their livestock-raising activities into a commercial industry. Each GR established its own committee, and the grazing lands became the communal property of those who were registered with the government. After the formation of the GRs, the people and their

livestock continued to cross boundaries to use the natural resources they had used before this system was implemented. However, since the 1980s much of the previously communal land of the GRs has been divided into private holdings. In the Kajiado South constituency, where six GRs were formed alongside the individual ranches around the towns of Loitokitok, Rombo and Kimana, subdivision of the land did not occur until the first decade of the twenty-first century.

II. Outline of Wildlife Conservation in Amboseli

Kenya was established by the United Kingdom as the East Africa Protectorate in 1895, and the Southern Game Reserve (27,700 km²) was established in 1899. In 1906, when the Southern Game Reserve was expanded, the current Kajiado South constituency was included within it, and local Maasai were allowed to continue living there. Customary hunting by local peoples was prohibited by law, but the authorities did not strictly enforce this ban.

The adoption of the national park system in 1945 elicited strong local resistance in Amboseli to the development of a national park. Consequently, instead of a national park, Amboseli National Reserve was established in 1948, to which local people had access. However, after independence in 1963, Amboseli National Park was established, after several instances of local resistance by way of hunting. Local people were removed from the land within its boundary in 1974. Afterwards, between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, with the aid of international donors, the government implemented economic and social development projects which targeted the GRs around the park.

Since 1990, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), a newly established parastatal organization that administrates for all wildlife and national parks in the country, has returned a certain percentage of national park admission fee revenues to surrounding GRs, as a CBC program. Additionally, in 1992, the KWS approached the Kimana GR, which adjoins to Amboseli National Park on its eastern side, with a plan to build a wildlife sanctuary. The sanctuary officially opened in 1996 and started to benefit the Kimana GR. In parallel with it, efforts to conserve wildlife in a “community-based” manner have been launched by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private corporations in an attempt to develop the tourist trade within the ecosystem. In 2007, a global NGO began spearheading the implementation of a plan to create protected areas in a wildlife corridor called conservancies between Amboseli National Park and the sanctuary mentioned above. In 2012, a conservation fund was established, based on these conservancies, by the local people themselves. However, at the same time, triggered by a fatal human-wildlife accident, a critical situation that has not been experienced in recent years, arose between the Maasai people and the KWS.

In the next section, I divide this history into four stages based on the local attitudes toward conservation initiatives and explain the local situations in more detail.

CHANGING LOCAL REACTIONS TO CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

I. Before CBC: Rejection of a Park⁽¹⁾

In Kenya, the National Parks Ordinance was enacted in 1945 and the national park system was introduced. The Game Policy Committee was established in 1938 and worked on the selection of sites for national parks and the contents of the legal system. In 1946, Nairobi National Park was established as the first in the country, and the formation of Amboseli National Park was discussed by the government. However, angered by that plan, local people demonstrated their hostility by killing wild animals. This was because the establishment of a park would mean no entry or resource use by local people inside it. Finally, Amboseli was established as a national reserve in 1948, with the provision that local people would still be allowed to live in and utilize it. Local people continued to harbor a fear of land being taken by the government. In 1968, the government developed another plan for the creation of a national park with the stipulation that alternate watering grounds, located outside the park, would be developed. On this occasion, too, local people demonstrated their opposition through renewed wildlife killing.

During this struggle, in 1973, the *Development Plan for Amboseli* was completed by a group of people led by the Caucasian researcher, David Western. He later played a leading role in formalizing the CBC (Western & Wright, 1994), and due to its achievement, became the second director of the KWS. The plan was created as an alternative to a national park with the intention of effectively reconciling and balancing the protection of the ecosystem with the need to maintain local livelihoods. According to the *Development Plan for Amboseli*, six percent of the ecosystem was set aside for the creation of Maasai Park in order to conserve vitally important wildlife habitat. Local people would have restrictions imposed on their resource use within the Park. In exchange for it, they were guaranteed their rights to economic benefits from the park, and land other than the park. Major donors and related ministries expressed support for this proposal, but local elders not only rejected it but also criticized Western for his inclusion of the word “park.” Though a national park and the Maasai Park were totally opposite in their attitudes toward local society, because they bear the same name of “park,” they were the same thing to local people. In the late 1970s, local people were so overjoyed by the compensation offered under the plan, that some leaders pledged they would cooperate with efforts devoted to wildlife conservation. However, after the government failed to maintain the development aid during the 1980s, an increasing number of local people began bringing their livestock into the national park.

In this era, the point of contention was land, that is, access to the proposed area of Amboseli National Park. It covered the major part of Amboseli Swamp, which had been utilized by the Loitokitok Maasai, as well as wildlife, as an important grazing land in the dry seasons. Local attitudes toward conservation, or “park,” were hostile and skeptical. Their hostility was confirmed by repeated

resistance in the form of wildlife hunting, which occurred even when the government made a concession and presented compensation. When a pro-Maasai researcher devised the prototype for the CBC, the local elders rejected it and rebuked him. During these determined reactions, they did not consider their self-presentation. The reason why the plan for Amboseli National Park was devised was that the Maasai people were considered to be “degraders of the environment” (Hulme & Murphree, 2001b: 1), causing desertification by overgrazing (Anderson, 2002: 135). The Loitokitok Maasai understood the negative effect of a national park, and killed wildlife with the intention of thwarting the plan. However, no consideration was made concerning the destructive image of them held by outsiders, including policymakers. In fact, their headstrong attitudes resulted in strengthening their destructive image and urging the supporters of the national park to apply more pressure on the colonial administration.

II. Accepting CBC: Development of a Wildlife Sanctuary⁽²⁾

In 1990, the KWS was formed and CBC became one of the central policy issues. In two years, the KWS approached the Kimana GR with the proposal to build a wildlife sanctuary on its communal land. A sanctuary is, on the one hand, a protected area for conserving an important wildlife habitat outside the national park. On the other hand, it is an area for tourists to pay money and see wildlife. It took three years for the GR to accept the proposal. At first, local people were distrustful and suspected the government of trying to take their land, and as in the case of Amboseli National Park, using wildlife conservation as an excuse. However, as the KWS arranged observation tours and brought local representatives to popular tourist destinations in the country, they were persuaded that the government had no intention of taking land from them. Also, as they had observed the operations of several tourism-related activities inside and outside Amboseli National Park, they came to expect that tourism would bring a certain amount of monetary benefit to them. Consequently, the GR agreed to the construction of the sanctuary.

Upon its opening in 1996, the Kimana Community Wildlife Sanctuary (60 km²) was jointly operated by a manager chosen from among the GR members and by the GR committee. However, as Kenya's tourism industry experienced a nationwide slowdown starting in 1997, and in 1998 tourist visitation to the sanctuary also slowed. In 1998, the internationally sponsored CBC project finished and the KWS withdrew aid to the GR. Accordingly, the sanctuary was leased to a foreign capitalized tourism company, the African Safari Club (ASC), which was granted a 10-year lease from 2000 to 2009. With this change, the GR experienced a significant increase in economic benefits; cash revenue surged from an estimated gross of around 17,000 USD (Knegt, 1998: 92 cited in Rutten, 2004: 15) in the opening year to over 110,000 USD (Meguro & Inoue, 2011: 35). This revenue was administrated by the GR committee and used for student scholarships, healthcare subsidies, and the subdivision of communal land. As a result of the subdivision, each of the 844 registered members acquired 0.8 ha

of farmland and 24 ha of dry land.

As explained above, when the local people first heard the idea of the community sanctuary, they mistrusted the conservation initiatives, but their attitude changed to a more acceptant one. In the process, the point of contention shifted from land (the fear of land being taken) to benefit (the expectation of tourism income). After the ASC developed the sanctuary and paid a considerable sum of money, there was no public support in the GR for asking for the discontinuance of the sanctuary, though the majority of local people did not approve the idea of CBC. On the other side, local people were alert to the government's possible intention of land robbery at first. Nonetheless, they did not consider their image, as held by outsiders, nor deliberately produce any self-representation so as to acquire more aid.

III. Negotiating CBC: Contracts with a Private Enterprise and an NGO

The contract-based income from the ASC enabled the Kimana GR to achieve its hoped-for subdivision of communal land. Generally speaking, the majority of its members appreciated the sanctuary as it produced tangible benefits. However, conflicts arose between the GR and the ASC. From around 2005, the ASC started to fail to pay its salary to the staff who were employed by the GR, and the land-use fee for the GR. The limited number of local people actually employed by the ASC, and the arbitrary withdrawal of tourist access to a cultural village, increased the discontent and anger of the members with it. The GR committee talked to the manager and the president of the ASC, but the problem was not fully resolved. The majority of GR members became unable to suppress their anger with the ASC. An armed faction led by the chairman and the treasurer stormed the sanctuary and forcibly evicted the ASC manager on September 11, 2007. After this event, the GR had no will to renew the lease agreement with the ASC, but as a result of persuasion by an area Member of Parliament (MP), the GR determined to allow the ASC to manage the sanctuary until their contract expired in September 2009.

In November 2008, discussions began regarding the selection of a company to manage the sanctuary after the ASC vacated this role. Three tourism companies in addition to the ASC applied for this position. The opinions of the GR "officials"; i.e., the chairman, secretary, and treasurer, divided on which company to choose, causing friction in the GR. Many members criticized officials' conduct in public meetings, pointing out that it would be impossible to select the next management company unless the decision was reached consensually by them. Finally, at a meeting in July 2009, the three officials endorsed a proposal submitted by the MP, selecting a candidate that was not involved in the controversy, so as to prevent resentment in the GR. While discord increased in the GR, the members actively asked questions and made requests about contract clauses. Specifically, they attempted to clarify which contract would bring the greatest benefits. In addition, after the bitter experiences with the ASC, members cautiously discussed the duration of the contract and the opportunity to review its contents.

Meanwhile, another project was launched in July 2007 by a global conservation NGO, the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). Subdivision of the GR had enabled the enclosure, development and sale of a parcel of land subdivided that would result in the destruction and fragmentation of wildlife habitat. To prevent this from happening, the AWF presented a proposal to establish three conservancies between the Amboseli National Park and the Kimana Sanctuary. A series of meetings was held, but the local people did not express any opposing opinions. A basic agreement about land-use fees and other matters was reached in the absence of any significant controversy. However, in September 2008, when the AWF was ready to sign a written agreement with 50 local people to establish the Osupuko Conservancy, the local participants expressed their first strong resistance. On that day, the AWF representative left the meeting without any constructive discussion with members. This strong resistance by the local people had been encouraged by the chairman of the conservancy in an effort to pressure the AWF, which had yet to make any fee payments to members. A noteworthy aspect of this process is that when the members demanded the AWF pay the land-use fee immediately, they said that they would enclose and develop their land if the AWF did not agree with them, and that it was not the AWF but the members who had the right to make the final decision. Their remarks showed that they were aware of their position as private landowners. Finally, the agreement was signed at the end of October, and the first land-use fee installments were deposited in members' bank accounts several days later, which left them satisfied and rejoicing.

However, more difficulties subsequently arose with the contract. Some members sought to sign secondary contracts with other outside parties. Although the landowners were eager to sign, the AWF opposed these contracts because of the danger of damaging wildlife habitat. Other conservancy members stated that their behaviors were also against the contract. In the meantime, the local people repeatedly expressed an interest in raising the fees, but this proposal was rejected by the project manager of the AWF. In 2012, one member made new fields inside the conservancy and knowing this, other members said they would do the same if the AWF did not raise the land-use fees.

While the donors are different, the sanctuary and the conservancy are the same in that both have wildlife conservation and local development as their objectives. For the members, however, benefit is more important than conservation. Their attitudes toward outside developers and donors were more active. In the development of the sanctuary, locals welcomed outsiders and were ready to negotiate with them, trying to push through their own demands, grounded in the knowledge that they were landowners and thus able to decide land use and select a partner. Aside from monetary income, they asked the outsiders to do something about the human-wildlife conflicts, such as crop raiding and livestock depredation. Doing so, they presented themselves as victims of wildlife for the purpose of justifying their claims. However, things did not go as they wished. One tourism company made a promise that if it was chosen as the management body of the sanctuary, it would construct electric fences to prevent crop raiding

and pay compensation for livestock depredation, but the company was excluded from the list by the MP because it was involved in the conflict.

IV. Proposing CBC: Claiming a National Park and Launching a Conservation Fund

In July 2012, a young warrior, a son of a member of the Olgulului GR, was attacked by a buffalo during livestock grazing, and subsequently died. This was the beginning of what was later called the “crisis in Amboseli” (Kajiado County Press, 2012). After the incident, a KWS warden inspected the attack location together with local residents. During the inspection, he insulted the local people by making an offensive insinuation about the boy’s death, saying that he might have been killed by a Maasai colleague, not a buffalo. Upon direction by local elders, more than two hundred warriors took revenge by killing a buffalo and spearing several elephants (The Star, 2012). After this, the KWS set up a meeting between its Director and the local Maasai community. However, on the appointed day, the Director just sent a member of the Board of Trustees and a warden of Amboseli National Park as his proxy, and did not show up. This infuriated the Maasai and the next day, more than four hundred Maasai men launched an attack on wildlife, killing ten buffaloes, one lion, and one elephant (The Star, 2012). Subsequently, the KWS announced that the director had agreed to visit Amboseli and discuss matters with the local community on August 6. At the same time, the game rangers of the KWS, together with the General Security Unit, assaulted both young and elderly men living adjacent to the park, sending tens of people to hospital and worsening the relationship.

On August 6, the Director of the KWS visited Amboseli and talked directly to local people. During the meeting, representatives of the local community demanded the community’s right to manage and benefit from Amboseli National Park. Their claim was based on the Presidential Decree of 2005, which ordered that the status of Amboseli be changed from a national park to a national reserve, meaning that jurisdiction over the land be transferred from the KWS to the Olkejuado County Council (OCC, the local authority for Kajiado County). They justified their claims by arguing that the Maasai had conserved and coexisted with wildlife but received no benefit from it.

In the meeting, unity of the Maasai with the OCC was emphasized, but the fact is that the council had rarely worked with the Loitokitok Maasai who had coexisted with the wildlife around Amboseli National Park and thus became the target of the Director’s discussion. The first large-scale hunting in July was organized by the local people in the Olgulului GR without any specific motive regarding the national park. In contrast, the second raid on wildlife was led by the chairman of the OCC, who was a Maasai but not a member of the Loitokitok section. Many stakeholders, including the KWS, a conservation NGO and an official of the Kimana GR, publicly harbored suspicions about the political intentions of the OCC to increase their rights and interests in a national park. The KWS Director rejected their demand based on the argument that the presidential decree was quashed by the High Court, and there was no law that

allowed the KWS to share the management and revenue of a national park with local councils and communities. However, he promised to increase educational subsidies, as local people had requested.

About a week after the meeting with the KWS Director, a ceremony to launch the Predator Conservation Fund (PCF) was held at the Kimana GR. The establishment of the PCF was agreed in June 2012 among about 200 members of three conservancies (Osupuko, Kilitome, and Nailepo), all of which had been led by the AWF. It was launched in the absence of any funds from external sources. In addition to the members of the three conservancies and the project manager of the AWF, the “officials” of the Kimana GR, the local MP, the senior warden of Amboseli National Park (an officer of the KWS), and representatives of tourist lodges in the area, were present at the ceremony. Two members received the first payment of compensation money generated by this program. Also, a Caucasian entrepreneur who was running an eco-lodge and paying compensation for livestock depredation in Imbirikani GR received both a gift and praise. He had promised to help this program beforehand and gave monetary support for the ceremony. During the ceremony, many Maasai leaders spoke to the guests. They explained that the members valued wildlife and were willing to use their own money for its conservation, or added that they would welcome contributions to enable them to maintain the program for the sake of wildlife.

According to the leaders, the idea of the PCF originated with the members who were earnest in wildlife conservation, but there was a relevant context. Before they launched the program, the members had repeatedly asked the AWF and other donors for compensation, and these requests had been refused. Then, in May 2012, a committee member of Imbirikani GR gave advice to the chairman of the Osupuko Conservancy that instead of merely requesting unilateral aid, they should start a program by themselves to demonstrate their drive and the program’s value to potential donors. After this suggestion, the committees started persuading other members and established a new compensation program. According to the chairman of the Osupuko Conservancy, members would continue to contribute even if they received external funds because they wanted to diversify its usage. He noted that this kind of mutual aid was so common in Maasai society that members were accustomed to it.

In these two cases, the Maasai created new self-representations. Before, when they welcomed and asked outsiders for benefits and aid, they usually mentioned the serious damages by wildlife. Also, they showed no initiative in conserving wildlife by themselves. This meant that they asked for compensation and countermeasures from the position of being victims. In contrast, the speakers in the above-mentioned meetings stated that the Maasai had a will to conserve and coexist with wildlife, explaining local people’s voluntariness and eagerness for wildlife conservation and coexistence. When they demanded certain interests and support from outsiders, it was for the sake of the wildlife rather than the people, and the Maasai people were presented as conservationists rather than victims. This change in self-representation was thought to be their strategic choice, with due consideration of the present conservation policy which requests local

participation and community initiatives in coexistence, and for the recent aid framework demanding that local people show their “ownership” by making and observing contracts with donors (cf. Mosse, 2005).

POSITIONINGS OF THE LOITOKITOK MAASAI AND ITS OUTCOMES

I. Positionings of the Loitokitok Maasai

In the last section, the change in attitudes of the Loitokitok Maasai toward wildlife conservation was explored. To summarize, before CBC was implemented as a national conservation policy, especially from the 1940s onward as the national park system was introduced into Kenya, land was the central point of contention. The local people’s distrust of outsiders was so deep that they rejected even the prototype CBC because it included the word “park.” From the fact that, without any negotiation and compromise, they opposed, sometimes by resorting to force, any conservation initiatives that included the formation of a park, it appears they recognized little necessity in presenting a certain self-image to outsiders. The Loitokitok Maasai enjoyed several economic and social development projects from the late 1970s up to the beginning of the 1980s. However, judging from their reaction to the CBC initiatives in the next decade, these were not enough for them to suspend their animosity.

In the 1990s, although they came to have expectations of profit from tourism, when they first heard of a wildlife sanctuary, the members of the Kimana GR suspected it was a pious fraud for another “land grab.” However, their fear of this land grab was banished once the KWS arranged an observation tour and discussed issues with local representatives. After that, the GR accepted the sanctuary, and the points of contention changed from land to benefits. As they received benefits from the company-operated sanctuary, they adopted more receptive and active attitudes toward potential donors and developers. However, this did not mean that local people welcomed all outsiders. Rather, having troubles with its manager, they tried to expel the ASC, despite the still-valid contract. Thereafter, they became more cautious of entering contracts with outsiders. In concurrence with this, their self-representation changed. Before, when they put their demands to private enterprises and NGOs, they used to refer to themselves as landowners or victims to justify their requests. More recently, local people have been represented as conservationists who have long coexisted harmoniously with wildlife and have the will to continue to do so in the future. This representation was consistent with outsiders’ ideal of CBC (wildlife conservation and local development with community participation/ownership). Because this was a deliberative act, taking into consideration outsiders’ ideas, it is their “positioning,” in the original sense of Hodgson (2011).

II. Intention and Outcomes of Positionings

The local people changed their attitudes, and later their representation so as to obtain more tangible benefits. In doing so, they proved that they have a certain agency. However, the outcomes include both positive and negative aspects. For example, the Kimana GR was able to start subdivision thanks to the monetary income from the Kimana Sanctuary. However, due to the trouble with the ASC, they did not gain any income for a few years. With regard to the Osupuko Conservancy, it provided annual incomes for its members, bringing joy to them at first. However, as time passed, their feeling of satisfaction faded, and they started requesting an increase. This was refused by the AWF, and some members began to cultivate their land against the contract of the conservancy in search of more income. In the case of the “crisis of Amboseli” too, the Director of KWS promised an increase in educational subsidies for GRs around the national park, as his representatives claimed, but this had only been a minor request among various that were made by the Maasai people in the process of the case. Thus, we should not overlook local agency, but at the same time, we cannot overestimate it.

Another point of argument is the effect of their recent positionings, or the change in their representation. As explained before, the attitudes of the local society shifted from hostile to favorable, and from passive to active. In the case of the “crisis in Amboseli” and the PCF, the image of the Maasai people as what is usually called “conservationists” in Kenya (those who conform to the ethics of animal welfare and rights), was represented by the leaders. When some of those leaders were outsiders of the Loitokitok section, it is questionable whether they were legitimate representatives of the local community. This is a theme for further research, but it must be noted that the problem is not just their legitimacy as representatives, but also the content of the representation itself. After the closing of the meeting with the Director of the KWS on 6 August, a local elder reproached the Director for not offering a solution strategy for dealing with the dangers posed by wildlife, citing the death of a young warrior. As this case suggests, the damage and dangers associated with wildlife are serious matters to the local people (cf. Meguro, 2010). The change in representation of the Maasai people from victims to conservationists only serves to keep the problem of damage inflicted by wildlife out of sight.

Here, the problem concerning the current conservation policy in Kenya comes up. Local people must obey the laws, and those of Kenya are strongly influenced by the animal welfare/rights movement, which puts up a colossal sum for conservation-related organizations, including the KWS, and induces them to oppose any killing of wildlife (Kabiri, 2010; Martin, 2012). In the existing circumstances, becoming conservationists may be the only alternative for local people to make donors produce more benefits, and increases in monetary income may reduce the conflicts and mitigate the aggrieved feelings of the local people toward wildlife to some degree. However, it may lead to the reinforcement of the current situation and the concealment of the existence and opinion of victims,

leaving the mortal threat of wildlife and the use of violence to force them to accept things as they are.

III. Themes for Future Research

In this article, local agency is examined from the perspective of positionings. A tentative conclusion is that the Maasai people have not been passive subjects obedient to external powers, and even changed their positioning, which led to somewhat greater benefits, but when these changes were initiated by selective leaders, they carried the risk of failing to notice local opinions of protest against the status quo and the influence of the specific global environmentalism. To produce more favorable negotiating outcomes, at the expense of other issues, their positionings must be in line with the priorities set by outsiders. However, the PCF may provide us with a suggestion as to the potential of local societies. Although this program has not yet reached the evaluation stage, it nonetheless seems to be worthy of attention because it meets the requirements of supporting organizations and also conforms to local customs of mutual aid.

On the one hand, we need to further study the politics of image and representation of local societies among multilayered stakeholders, on local to global scales, and on the other hand, we need to take a close and continuous look at a local society so as to follow their positionings, even if their actions do not always produce a result. After finding local agency, the next step is to consider whether that agency can be regarded to have potential for abandoning the status quo and creating a more desirable environment.

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NOTES

- (1) This section is based on Western & Wright (1994) and Western (1997).
- (2) This section is based on Meguro & Inoue (2011).

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